THE WILL OF GOD PERFORMED ON EARTH.

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT UTICA, N. Y. OCT. 8, 1834,

BEFORE THE

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

FOR

FOREIGN MISSIONS,

AT THEIR

TWENTY-FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING.

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BOSTON:
PRINTED BY CROCKER AND BREWSTER,
47 Washington Street.
1835.

SERMON.

MATT. vi. 10.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!

THIS petition is from the lips of One who himself came to seek and save that which was lost. It speaks the emotions of the Savior's heart toward the heathen. He thought of *them*, when he left his people this form of prayer.

The phrase, *the will of God*, denotes both the divine law and the divine purpose. The divine law includes all that God requires; the divine purpose all that he means should take place. The divine law is the rule of action to accountable agents,—every where commanding what is right, and prohibiting what is wrong; the divine purpose is a rule of action to no being in the universe, save God himself, and expresses no legal authority and no moral obligation whatever. The former respects the conduct of intelligent agents as right or wrong in its own nature; the latter has respect to *events*, and is concerned with the *consequences*, of

human conduct, with which a rule of action has nothing to do. The divine purpose, or the decretal will of God, *is* accomplished as really, as extensively, as perfectly on the earth, as it is in heaven; and it were absurd to offer a prayer that calls in question this great truth. But the preceptive will of God is accounted as a strange thing—is abused and vilified; and however venerated in higher and purer worlds, is despised and trampled on on earth. It is this great moral code, as revealed in the precepts and prohibitions of the Bible, to which our text refers. That this may be performed on earth as it is in heaven, is a very proper, as well as unutterably important object of supplication. In illustrating and enforcing the import of this petition, therefore, on the present occasion, my design is,

To show how the will of God is done in heaven; and

Why it is desirable that it should be thus done on the earth. My

First object is to show how the will of God is done in heaven.

Heaven is a section of the divine empire, and as really and as much under the binding force of law, as any other part of God's dominions. The same God exists and governs there, that exists and governs here. He is the Creator, Benefactor, and Lawgiver of heaven, as well as of earth. In that invisible world, there are essentially the same moral relations of intelligent beings, and the same laws founded on those relations, which exist in this lower world. The *origin* of moral obligation,

therefore, the principle and foundation of moral rectitude, are one and the same in both worlds; and hence the *standard*, the rule by which the moral conduct of intelligent creatures is regulated, is the same in both. And in heaven, its existence and obligations are not only acknowledged and felt, but obeyed as in no other world.

All the obligations of the divine law are there fulfilled. Every precept and every prohibition is there regarded with reverence and love. The divine will is done in all its parts. All those affections of mind which are due from creatures to their creator, from subjects to their supreme Lord, from pensioners upon the divine bounty to the first and best Benefactor, and from redeemed sinners to their all-sufficient and gracious Redeemer, are there enkindled and sustained. All that is elevating and joyful in complacency and delight in the divine character and administrations; all that fills and overpowers the soul with admiration of God's wonderful works; all that is amiable and lovely in that lowliness and sweetness of mind which are characteristic of those who veil their faces in the divine presence; all that is peaceful in resignation, and joyous in gratitude, is there mingled and blended in an obedience which expresses all the beauties of holiness. There are no rival deities there, and no idolatry to subvert the throne of the Most High. There is no profanity, irreverence, or lightness, either of thought, word, or deed; but every expression of reverence and filial fear. There is no violation of the sabbath there; but that glorious world is one vast temple, and its revolving ages are one everlasting day of holy rest. There

are no infringements upon the claims of social piety,—no relation inverted,—no tie torn asunder, —no principle of subordination destroyed,—but the vast assembly exhibits a picture of peace and concord, of harmony and affection, which nothing destroys or interrupts. There is no murderous hand or malignant heart there; no harshness, or cruelty; no furious and revengeful passions; no unkindness, or even criminal inattention and negligence. There is no licentiousness, nor impurity; no depredation or fraud; no locks nor bars; and no suspicions of dishonesty. There is no lying tongue, nor covetous desire; but truth, that strong bond of society—that firm foundation of confidence and intercourse, remains inviolate; and every inordinate desire is superseded by that chastened, subdued spirit, that secures uninterrupted tranquillity and repose. Heaven presents the noblest, the sublimest, the loveliest character in the universe. It is uniform, consistent, complete, and entire. It has no blemishes; no cloud, nor shadow in its horizon; no spots on its disk; no waxing and wining light; but a steady, pure, and full-orbed splendor.

The will of God is also obeyed in heaven *by all its inhabitants.* There may be and probably are, great diversities of rank, as well as different orders of intelligence in the heavenly world; for "there are thrones and dominions, and principalities and powers." Heaven is an immense family, large and extended beyond our highest conceptions. It is not improbable that that amazing world exceeds in extent and variety, in splendor and glory, all other worlds and systems combined. But the

same spirit pervades the whole. The unnumbered hosts of the unfallen, whatever be their diversity of rank and condition, together with the countless multitudes of the redeemed, wherever their residence may be determined in this endless empire, possess the same sacred and elevated character. Though augmented from generation to generation to a multitude which no man can number, yet is there no jar in their society, and no discord in their song. Within the vast compass of this immense population—throughout all these unexplored regions—amid the whole of this vast assemblage of existencies, from the highest to the lowest, there is not one whose bosom does not glow with holy ardor to do the will of God. One base and selfish mind would poison these sources of joy. But there is "nothing there that defileth." Over all that sublime and magnificent system, lighted up with stars and orbs differing from one another in glory, there is no lawless planet—no unsubjugated province—no land of darkness—no pagan island—no habitation of cruelty—no revolting heart: nothing to destroy the moral harmony of the sphere, or to introduce confusion and anarchy among its inhabitants.

In heaven, the will of God is likewise obeyed with *unfeigned sincerity and cheerfulness.* Obedience is not a yoke at which those pure and holy spirits reluctate, but a service in every view pleasant and agreeable. The divine will is there obeyed from the heart. The law which governs them, governs their outward conduct by first governing their "willing and warm affections." No formal sacrifice is offered on that altar. There

are no pensiveness and gloom there, but every thing that is buoyant and cheerful. It is not the cold and cheerless sense of duty—the heavy bond of obligation—the solemn sanction of law merely, that constrains their acquiescence; it is the sweeter, stronger cord of love, irresistibly fascinating them with its charms, and drawing their willing, gratified minds as "with the bands of a man." In this lower world, religion is like an exotic plant—confined, stinted, and depressed. Nay, it is often a meagre, ungainly, haggard thing. It partakes of the cold and cheerless soil on which it grows. It never arrives at maturity, and not unfrequently blooms to fade. But in heaven, it possesses a purity of transparent splendor, a beauty of transcendent brightness, such as no pencil can paint, and no poetry describe. It is no depressed and drooping floweret, but a scion from the Tree of Life, luxuriant and fair, fragrant with blossoms, and yielding its fruit every month. I had almost said, it is the mirth of heaven to obey the statutes of its King. The employment nourishes and draws toward it all their ardor and sensibility. Even the imagination, that wandering faculty, which contributes so much to the happiness and misery of men on the earth, which is the sport of temptation, and the plaything of the arch deceiver, there exerts its magic and hallowed influence, ever supplying the materials for some new work of benevolence, some new purpose of devotement to God, some new scene of still more gratified holiness and exquisite joy. Their obedience is indeed the obedience of intelligence, thought, and purpose; but it is also the winged obedience of emo-

tion and desire. It is the obedience of love. Love is the element in which celestial spirits breathe. Love is the soul of heaven,—strong and urgent, "swift to do his will, hearkening to the voice of his word." I may add,

In heaven the will of God is done *perfectly and for ever.* "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Heaven is full of God. The wonders of creation, providence, and grace, replete with exhibitions of the Deity, there arrest, and elevate, and transform the soul. The reasons and motives of the divine conduct are there disclosed, clearly discerned by their enlightened understandings, and delightfully enjoyed by their holy hearts. There the method of redemption by Jesus Christ, throwing its light upward from this lower world, becomes the mirror which reflects the loveliest and most radiant of the divine glories. If holy minds advance in holiness as they dwell in light, and if their holiness is perfect in proportion to their knowledge, then is there in that luminous world a constant and resistless flow of holy affection, "clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb." There are no seasons of spiritual langor and declension there. No wandering thought, no vain desire, no sinful emotion, there creeps into the soul. There is no backwardness nor unfruitfulness there; but all the activity and fervor which the souls of its exalted inhabitants are capable of exercising. There is no weariness nor satiety; but the ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, cease not, day nor night, saying one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty;" and

never rest from their everlasting anthems of praise. Eternity rolls on, and "he that is holy, is holy still."

Thus is the will of God done in heaven; in all its parts, by every individual, sincerely and cheerfully, perfectly and for ever. We proceed to the

Second object of our discourse, which is to show why it is desirable that it should be thus obeyed on earth.

For this Jesus Christ has taught his disciples in every age of the world to pray; "Thy will be done on earth, *as it is in heaven!*" If there is any meaning in this petition, it involves the idea that it is greatly desirable that the will of God should be thus obeyed on earth. In illustrating this part of our subject, we begin by remarking,

That the divine law *is no less binding on earth than it is in heaven.* Its obligations are real, and binding every where, throughout the whole range of God's dominions. Wherever thinking beings exist, whatever may be their condition and the gradations of their intellectual capacity, they are all bound by the same rule of action. Nor can it be otherwise, if we consider whence the rule emanates, or what it enjoins. Whatever demands obedience to its requisitions from one individual, demands it from another; whatever demands it from angels demands it from men; and whatever demands it from one world of intelligent agents, demands it from all worlds. The same natural, moral, and legal obligations exist on earth which exist in heaven. Nor is there any more excuse for

disobedience on earth than for disobedience in heaven. When the first sin was committed in heaven, the vile perpetrators were sunk instantly to the lake of fire; so when the first sin was committed on the earth, scarcely was the foul deed perpetrated, than the ashamed transgressors, conscious of their guilt, would fain have fled from the face of their Maker. Every man feels that, should iniquity again invade the celestial Paradise, it could not be palliated in the least degree. It alters not the nature of transgression that it is committed on the eastern or western hemisphere of this terraqueous globe; nor that it is committed in the celestial or terrestrial sphere; in time or in eternity; it is the same sinful thing in both; in both criminal, and equally without excuse. Not until the inhabitants of earth can destroy the divine existence, or their own, can they dissolve, suspend, or at all impair their obligations to do the will of God, as sincerely, fully, and perfectly as it is done in heaven. Besides,

It is *as reasonable* that the will of God should be done on earth, as that it should be done in heaven. The considerations which show that it is reasonable in one, show that it is reasonable in the other. In neither does it transcend the rights and prerogatives of the righteous and sovereign Lawgiver; and in both it is itself "holy, just, and good." Whatever dispositions of heart toward God and man are in themselves right and reasonable, and commend themselves to an enlightened conscience, and to the inspecting eye of infinite purity, the word of God requires; and it forbids nothing but absolute, detestable wickedness.

Wickedness is always unreasonable, wherever it is found; and there is nothing so reasonable, so beautiful, so lovely in the universe, as obedience to God. It is impossible there should be too much of it in any world, or too much required. Too pure and too accurate a rule of duty there cannot be; nor can men on the earth, any more than the angels in heaven, be directed by it with too much uncompromising exactness. What being in the universe could view the statutes of the divine kingdom with undiminished respect and reverence if they connived at the least moral obliquity? What would be thought of the adorable Lawgiver if he should adapt his claims to the perverse and perverted inclinations of men? The demands of the Bible are determined and graduated by the capacities of those to whom they are addressed, and the means and opportunities they enjoy of becoming acquainted with their duty. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Men, though benighted and fallen, are creatures of thought and reflection; they have understanding and conscience as well as the angels. And think of the means of holiness with which they are furnished. All that is attractive in the divine law; all that is instructive in the truths of a supernatural revelation; all that is alluring in the promises, and fearful in the threatenings, of the gospel; all that is affecting in the dispensations of a merciful and disciplinary Providence; all that is convincing in conscience and the Spirit of God; combine their force to lead them to a devoted obedience. Here, too, God is reconciling the world to himself by Jesus Christ. O, what a flood of

light! what a pressure, what urgency of motive—what a view of God in the person of his Son! It is true that the inhabitants of earth are dependent for holiness; and so are the inhabitants of heaven. And if they were not, we have not now to learn that a creature's dependence does not diminish the force of his obligations, nor render it less reasonable and proper that every man should do his duty. It is true that men are creatures of sense, and accessible to a thousand snares. And so was Jesus Christ; and yet in his human nature he perfectly obeyed the law of God. From the beginning to the close of his life he transgressed in nothing. Men would be subjected to no temptations that are irresistible, had they a right moral disposition. And where would be the force of obligation, if temptation could annihilate or relax the bonds of moral government? It is altogether reasonable, therefore, that the will of God should be done on earth as it is in heaven. *Why* is it not reasonable? Is it reasonable for the immortal princess of the divine kingdom to obey their Sovereign—and is it unreasonable for man? Shall those bright partakers of the divine glory be under obligations of perfect rectitude, and shall men be exempted from the bond? Shall those favored attendants at the heavenly court "consent to the law that it is good;" and shall poor abject, fallen man, contend with God, and complain that "his ways are not equal?" We may remark also that,

Perfect obedience to the will of God *would produce the same degree of happiness on earth that it produces in heaven.* The foundation on which the happiness of thinking beings rests is their obe-

dience to the will of God. Heaven is the seat of supreme and unmingled blessedness, because it has a holy character. Individually and relatively, as parts and as a whole, men would be supremely happy, if they were perfectly holy. Experience and observation evince the happy effects, even of the very partial and imperfect holiness which good men possess in the present life. What new affections and hopes, what divine peace and joy, are imparted to the soul, when that moral transformation which terminates in the sinless purity of the heavenly world is but begun! When first the heart is dissolved with the mild influences of the Spirit of grace, when once it is imbued with the love of God and man, what sweet repose possesses it! Its struggles for a while seem to be over. It has peace with God, and peace with all men. Its alarms of conscience are still. And not until the workings of iniquity revive, do these joys pass away. And when, in his progressive career of sanctification, the regenerated man becomes more holy, and the power of indwelling corruption is gradually broken and prostrate, how does his light break in as the morning, and his joys become like the "spring tide which overflows its banks!" Witness the blessedness of David and Paul, of Whitefield and Payson, when their transported spirits broke forth in ecstasies, and complained of this prison-house of clay. Measures of happiness like these, a frame of mind even thus calm and joyous, were a prelibation of heaven. If the earth on which we dwell were imbued with no holier a spirit than this, who does not see that it would be an exquisitely happy world? But if, instead of

being thus imperfect, its numerous inhabitants possessed the pure character of heaven, how nearly resembling heaven would be their joy! Over all the regions of the globe would every pulse beat, every heart throb, and every tongue vibrate, to the claims of holy love. Disorder and tumult would be unknown; the rod of the oppressor would be broken; and injustice and war would no more ravage the habitations of men. Individual quietness, domestic discord, and social joy, would change the face of human society in every land. Universal peace and love, every where mingling themselves with the lustre and loveliness of purer worlds, would every where light up the abodes of this hitherto depraved, benighted, and miserable creation; and nothing would be seen but spectacles of loveliness and beauty, and nothing heard but the voice of joy and praise. How clear, transparent, and serene the light that would then be diffused over the creation—how rapturous the flame that would glow in every bosom—how thrilling the emotion that would enliven every song! What a picture of the bosom of angels would be the sweet tranquillity of every child of Adam! Like what a "sea of glass" would the minds of men become—everywhere placid and unruffled, and reflecting the colors of the rainbow about the throne! What a world! when God shall thus create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy; and when, compared with this new spiritual creation, the former heavens and the former earth shall not be remembered nor come into mind. Were the benevolent aims and tendencies of obedience obtained, men would possess the happiness of

angels, and earth become the miniature of heaven. I may also remark,

God would be as much *honored and glorified by the obedience of his creatures on earth, as he is honored and glorified by the obedience of his creatures in heaven.* That he is eminently exalted by the sinless perfection of the heavenly world, none are disposed to question. His existence and supremacy, his government and providence, his purity and justice, his goodness and mercy, are there honored and magnified; and the full glory of his character, reflected in the sinless obedience of its countless inhabitants, there shines in progressive resplendency. Every tongue there speaks well of God; every mind sees him as he is; every heart loves and exalts him; and the only emulation is to ascribe the highest honors to his name.

And may not men on the earth honor and exalt God in the same way, and by the same means? Whoever tarnished the divine glory by doing the divine will? Where did holiness ever dishonor that holy Lord God? What way of honoring him has ever been discovered by the lights of nature and reason, or is revealed in the Scriptures, other than obeying his commandments? All the tendencies of obedience are to honor and exalt him, while all the tendencies of transgression are invariably to dishonor and degrade him. There is nothing by which men can in any degree honor and exalt God, except doing his will. To love and obey him, is the first duty of every rational creature; and when the same spirit of perfect allegiance glows in the bosom of men which glows in the bosoms of angels, the same enlivened adora-

tions will animate all their services, and God the Creator and Redeemer will receive the same glory and honor, thanksgiving and power, which are paid to him by the pure spirits before the celestial altar.

Conceive of the spirit of perfect obedience to the divine will pervading this lower world. Behold these creatures of God, in all their multitude, in all their variety of condition and place, and in all the gradations of their intellectual endowment, all regarding him with the highest veneration and love, and conducting themselves toward one another as toward brethren of the same vast family. See them doing the will of God as it is done in heaven—failing in no precept—never varying from this standard of perfect rectitude—unceasingly devoted to their duty, and from the best spirit—chargeable with nothing that can be condemned or reproached; and how would the Spirit and glory of God overlay this renovated creation! No longer would his character be defamed, his government impugned, his designs impeached and opposed, nor his honors taken from him; but every where would he be brought forward to the view of men, and every where acknowledged as God over all, blessed for ever. No longer would the kings of the earth take counsel against the Lord, and against his anointed; but princes and subjects, young men and maidens, old men and children, would give him the honor which is his due. His name would be great among the heathen, and in every place incense and a pure offering would be offered on his altar. But I will add,

In some respects, *God is even more honored by the obedience of earth than by the obedience of heaven.* The planet on which we dwell is a *peculiar* world. There are no such expressions of the divine goodness made to any other world, as are made to this. No where does this lovely attribute assume the form of grace, and make its highest expressions of favor to the guilty, except to men. No where does it flow through such a channel—the death and sacrifice of the Lord Incarnate. And to no such expressions of his goodness are so many events in the universe rendered subservient, as to these. Hence, when men on the earth become holy, they are a *peculiar people*, and show forth the glory of Him who has brought them out of darkness into his marvellous light. They differ from all other beings in the universe. They bear a relation to Jesus Christ nearer, dearer, and more exalted than the angels who never fell. They are the purchase of his blood, and the reward of his sufferings and death. In all their untold and unceasing multitudes, and from generation to generation, they are fallen by their iniquity, and reclaimed only by his incarnation and sacrifice, by the agency of his Spirit, and the instrumentality of his truth. Others have been created and preserved; these have been redeemed and sanctified. Others have been sustained in their primitive integrity; these are perfect through the comeliness which he has put upon them, and possess a beauty and loveliness surpassing the excellence of the unfallen. As penitent and believing sinners, they have traits of character which the unfallen cannot have; moral relations

which the unfallen cannot know; moral perceptions and emotions which the unfallen cannot feel; joys to which the unfallen are strangers; and a song in which the unfallen can never unite. God is glorified by the obedience of the unfallen; but their love and admiration flow forth in none of the forms peculiar to redeemed sinners. We are told that "there is joy in heaven over *one sinner* that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine *just persons* that need no repentance." And who does not see, that when such a population becomes holy, such rebels become children, such outcasts heirs of God; there is glory to God in the highest degree? At such a spectacle, well might the pure and incorporeal spirits before the throne exclaim, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts; the whole *earth* is full of his glory!" When it is seen and known to principalities and powers in heavenly places, that in defiance of the machinations of the prince of darkness, and the invincible depravity of man, the kingdom of Christ and the empire of mercy are triumphant; what honors will be recovered to the Great Supreme, of which he has been so long defrauded; what expressions of power and purity, justice and mercy, supremacy and wisdom, in impressiveness and beauty hitherto unequalled, will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea! How will the mountains echo it to the valleys, and the valleys roll it back again to the mountains, that the *Lord God omnipotent reigneth!* How will one continent proclaim it to another, and the ocean waft it to the main, that the "kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ!" And what

ascriptions of honor, what mighty thunderings of praise, in one grand concert of the millions of the redeemed, with the millions of the unfallen, like the sound of many waters, will pour forth their sublime and unceasing hallelujahs to God and the Lamb!

Thus desirable is it that the will of God should be done on earth, as it is in heaven. And now, in our application of this subject, let our—

First reflection be, *the sentiment of sympathy for this apostate and ruined world.* When we see what this world might become; how blissful—how exalted—how conspicuous in usefulness and joy—how crowned and glorified, and how subservient to the glory of its great Author! and when we survey it, and see what it is; how vile and abject—how dishonored and accursed—and how, instead of displaying abroad his glory, it brings shame and reproach on its mighty Maker; our "eye affecteth our heart." It is a world fallen by its iniquity, and under the wrath and curse of God. It is a mass of loathsome and corrupted wretchedness, and covered with the pall of death. It is a world prostrated by its own degradation and wickedness, and sunk in pollution and guilt. Survey the character and condition, the abjectness and misery, of men, as they rise before you even in the present state of existence. What indifference to God—what practical atheism—what polytheism and idolatry—and what subversion of religion and moral order overspread the nations! What sottish ignorance—what deep degradation—what disgusting habits—what revolting and horrid rites and ceremonies—what depraved passions and shocking

immoralities—what unnatural cruelties—what obscenity and blood—and what consequent wretchedness and woe disfigure the aspect, and mar the form of human society! And then lift the veil and look into eternity. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not enter into the kingdom of God?" Ah! what miseries are entailed upon such a race of offenders, beyond the grave! How forlorn, solitary, and desolate their condition! How bewildered and hopeless! What gloom and terror! What an existence replete with agony! What devouring fire! What weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth!

It is affecting to look back upon the history of the world, and measure the centuries that have gone by since God gave up the heathen to a reprobate mind. Although, since the incarnation of his Son, the Gentile nations have been the peculiar objects of his love, yet even now, eighteen hundred years after the apostles were expressly and divinely directed to preach the gospel to every creature, *six hundred millions* of immortal and accountable beings are living and dying without God and without hope. "Darkness covers the *earth*, and gross darkness the people." O it is the shadow of death! It is a deep reflection from the dark world of perdition. Some spots there are refreshed with heavenly verdure, but they are "few and far between," and the wearied eye seeks them almost in vain. Romanism, Mohammedanism, and paganism, constitute the religion of four-fifths of the human race. Even in Europe, modern, enlightened, christian Europe,—that "garden of knowl-

edge and pleasure,"—may be found many a moral desert—bleak and extensive wastes—territories and kingdoms both barbarous and cultivated, grown over with thorns and briers, where scarcely a plant of righteousness shoots above the ground, or a clod is turned for the harvest. If you turn to Asia,—that land of fertility and fragrance, of early revelations and richest promise,—that land of martyrs and birth-place of the Savior,—there are Turkey, Tartary, China, Hindoostan, India beyond the Ganges, Persia, Arabia, Siberia, and the Indian Archipelago,—in a word, that whole land, from Nova Zembla to Siam, and from the Dead Sea to the Eastern Ocean, a territory containing two-thirds of the population of the globe, almost wholly covered with the veil of pagan darkness, turned aside after the fables of the false prophet, or enticed by the lying wonders of the man of sin. And when you cast your eyes to Africa,—from the shores of Barbary to the cape of Good Hope, and from the Red Sea to the Atlantic,—there is little else than one wide scene of moral desolation, where idolatry and superstition reign triumphant among every tribe. And upon more than three-fifths of the American continent scarcely a ray of divine light has as yet descended. Over all these regions the prince of darkness extends his merciless dominion. With the exception of a few narrow zones of light, his dark and iron-hearted empire enwraps the globe. What a pitiable and humiliating sight! What a desert world! What a cloud of darkness, whose shadow is lengthened onward far as the eye can see! Alas, that such a picture

should ever be realized in the moral prospect of the world for which the Savior died! "*Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears!*" When mighty Redeemer, Oh when, thou once suffering, but now reigning prince! when shall the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ! But while we are constrained to take such a survey of the moral aspect of the world, our subject suggests,

2. *The ground of hope for its recovery.* Our blessed Lord instructed his disciples to pray, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven!" This petition implies, that it is his purpose to convert the heathen nations. Though as early as the days of Abraham he had given them up to judicial blindness, yet did he promise the father of the faithful, that "in him all the families should be blessed." Though during the whole of the Jewish dispensation, he separated his people from all intercourse with them, and denied them the means of grace, yet in the most prosperous state of that exclusive dispensation, he said to his Son, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee *the heathen* for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." In accordance with this promise is the prediction to the ancient church, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment *to the Gentiles!*" and the still more explicit and pregnant announcement, "All the ends of the earth shall remember, and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him."

And what has the world beheld in the retrospect of the past eighteen centuries? The covenant of exclusion abolished, and the excision of the Jews for the purpose of converting the Gentiles. And what will future ages behold? The conversion of the Jews, for the still more extended conversion of the Gentiles. "Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid! But rather through their fall, salvation is come to the Gentiles. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"

Dark as is the prospect, therefore, when we look abroad upon the world, the few rays of light that pierce the gloom, like the pale twilight of the morning, are destined to shine more and more unto the perfect day. This moral midnight shall be scattered, and the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his beams. The hard and barren clod shall be broken up, and the fields shall gradually become white to the harvest. When from his lofty elevation, John beheld the future glory of the church, he saw an angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth. Here are the hopes of this perishing world; here that moral transformation is to be sought for, by which fallen, sinning man becomes obedient and holy. The *gospel* is destined ultimately to illumine and regenerate the race. The *gospel* is the "wisdom of God and the power of God to salvation." The *gospel* can effectually reform the moral character of men. Never has this mighty agency been brought to bear upon the minds of men in vain;

and it never will be. Like the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters, it broods over this moral chaos; gives form, order, and beauty, to the shapeless mind, and creates all things new. There is hope for the recovery of this apostate world. Our Emmanuel is on the throne. His heart of love is bound up in this glorious consummation. Much has he accomplished within a few short years just gone by. A mighty work is he now urging forward, in preparing the nations to receive his gospel, and preparing a race of men to go up upon the length and breadth of the earth, to make it known to every kindred and tribe. The mountains of difficulty are becoming a plain; the walls of separation in the church of God are melting away; the imbedded prejudices of the heathen world are crumbling to pieces; the deep foundations of Paganism are breaking up; and the lights of philosophy and false religions seem sometimes to be emitting their last sickly and cloudy beams; while He, who is the "light of the world," and left his native orbit to illumine this far distant and benighted sphere, is destined, ere long, to be a "light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel." Take the Bible in your hands, my brethren, and go to the top of Calvary, and these clouds that settle upon the nations shall pass away. Oh, animating, transporting view, when the Redeemer shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied! Behold here how the north gives up, and the south keeps not back. See how his sons come from far, and his daughters from the ends of the earth, overspreading the heavens as a cloud, and flying as doves to their windows. See

the subjects of this redemption, assembling from every age and clime, every nation and people, every kindred and tongue, all "washed and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God;" and all returning with songs and everlasting joy.

Courage, then, ye who love the heathen. "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." Ye "shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

3. In view of this subject, shall we not *appreciate and magnify the missionary enterprise?* Our text obviously contemplates the work of missions. When it was uttered, a mere handful of Jews had embraced the gospel. But the adorable Master had his eye fixed on a course of exertions, that should extend his kingdom to the ends of the earth. He knew it was a kingdom, destined to prevail over all the powers of darkness, and to remain in perpetual and growing splendor, when other kingdoms shall pass away. Hence, when he requires his people to pray, that "his kingdom may come," as the only means and evidence of its advancement, he requires them to pray that "his will may be done;" nor do they, or he expect that this glorious empire will sway its sceptre over all the sons and daughters of men, until "his will is done on earth as it is in heaven."

How grand, therefore, how sublime and exalted is the missionary enterprise! To establish and extend the kingdom of his Son—a kingdom of light

and love, of truth and grace, of holiness, peace and joy; till it embrace the remotest tribe and habitation of men,—what a godlike enterprise is this! This is the object which He who dwells in the high and holy place, and inhabiteth eternity, had in view when he spread out the heavens as a curtain, and the earth as a tent to dwell in! For this he still upholds and governs the universe he has made. For this he gave his Son to die. For this his Spirit dwells among men. For this he has constituted a church in the world. For this he has revealed his word. For this he has established the ministry of reconciliation, and given them the commission—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." There is no work so grand and glorious as this—in the purity, disinterestedness, and greatness of its aims—in the obstacles and difficulties it has to contend with—in the means which are necessary to its success—in the toil and self-denial with which it is carried forward—in the interests which are subservient to its advancement—in the loftiness and sublimity of its moral associations—in its amazing extension and perpetuity—in its certain and everlasting triumphs—and its final rewards. It is an object that ought to take strong hold of the mind and conscience. It is worthy of intense thought, and the strongest and most ardent affections. It is one of those grand and stupendous objects, which, when once we give to it a steady and fixed attention, has weight and influence enough to fill and engross, absorb, transport, and transform the soul.

Need we plead with you then, my brethren, for a deeper interest in this great enterprise? We are

debtorsto the heathen. Neither Britain nor America has done her duty to the pagan world. The providence of God is opening before these churches numerous and extensive fields of missionary labor, demanding a great and immediate increase of men and means, and urging us to occupy them with the least possible delay. Men there are, who ought no longer to hesitate in consecrating themselves to this work. Men of the deepest piety, the soundest judgment, the best talents, and the most varied and extensive learning, which the church can furnish; men, who are moved by the cries and distresses of the heathen; men, whose love of country gives way to their love of the world,—must be found in great numbers, else ages of darkness will yet fulfil their "tardy and disastrous course" over the world. Which of us is duly sensible of the relation he sustains to the souls of the heathen? What have we done that is at all commensurate with their claims? What have we suffered, in what have we denied ourselves, that the gospel might have free course and be glorified throughout the earth? O could the spirits of Ziegenbalgh and Swartz, Elliot and Brainerd, Milne and Hall, Worcester and Evarts, bend from their thrones, in what tones of rebuke, solicitude, and expostulation, would they entreat these blood-bought churches, for the love of Jesus, to remember the perishing heathen!

What shall I say? Who can tell if some poor Pagan is not this day struggling for the assurance of a happy immortality, who "through your mercy might have obtained mercy." To the hopes of the dying believer he is a stranger. He never dwelt in a christian land. He never heard a sermon, nor

saw a Bible. He knows not that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin. No; he is the victim of a dark and dreadful idolatry! Around his bed of death gather the shades of an impenetrable night. Over his prospects for eternity are collected heavy and dense clouds of unappeased indignation. Approach and see. His bosom is torn and distracted with anguish. His lips quiver with agony, and he draws his last gasp in despair! And, O that it were one solitary Pagan only! But, think of *twenty-five millions* of your fellow-men, every year sinking in such a death; and then look into that deep abyss, where millions after millions of years roll on, and the miserable sufferers encounter new dangers—new fears—new scenes of anguish, without any prospect of termination; and what emotions of grief, abasement, and horror, may smite our bosoms! "We are verily guilty concerning our brother." Here are miseries which our faithfulness might have relieved. But for our guilty slumber, multitudes of these immortal beings might have been trained to a happy immortality. Excruciating thought! O immeasurable responsibility! because the remedy for these woes is in our hands. Sin infinite! to be washed away only by atoning blood. I add,

4. Our subject enforces *the importance of prayer for the missionary cause.* Our blessed Lord would have us remember this cause every day we live. You see from the place our text holds in the form of prayer he taught his disciples, that he would have us give it precedence to the petition for our daily bread, and even for his pardoning mercy.

I know of no truth more important to a body of men engaged in the missionary enterprise, than the absolute dependance of missions on God. I know of no sentiment worthy of being engraven in broader and deeper characters on the bosom of every missionary than this,—"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts!" God himself is the secret spring, the original mover of the whole design. From the days of the apostles to the present hour, his invisible hand set the whole machinery in motion. These designs of mercy to the heathen are of no earthly origin; and the entire success of them depends on him who gave them birth. His providence must smile, or the most benevolent plans will be defeated. His Spirit must be poured from on high, or the heathen world will remain still dead in sin, and grope their way to eternity through gloom dark as midnight. There is every thing to throw the cause of missions absolutely into the hands of God. Mere human influence can never subdue the stupid lethargy, the inexorable habits, the imbedded depravity of the pagan mind. There are most disheartening, most overwhelming obstacles at every step. And God will not give his glory to another. If we attempt the subjugation of this world to its rightful Prince, rather by our own policy and prowess than his presence and power, we shall be compelled to feel our insufficiency. Whether the cause decline or prosper, its friends must be driven to their knees. They must stretch out their hands unto God; they must lie on their faces at his throne. This is their confidence. "Prayers and pains through Jesus Christ," said the devoted Elliot, "can do any

thing. Other sentiments will rouse men from their stupidity; will kindle a momentary zeal; will excite a flush of animal feeling; will commend their cause to the enthusiasm of a popular assembly: this will give them power with God.

I wish it were in my power to enforce, as I desire, the importance of prayer for the cause of missions. My respected fathers and brethren, shall we not carry this cause with new fervor to the throne of grace? We cannot hope too much from God. Copious showers of divine grace upon the heathen will be poured forth as soon as a spirit of supplication is copiously poured forth upon the churches. Missionaries die and become the prey of savage men, for the want of prayer in the churches at home. It is a melancholy fact, that the number of conversions in heathen lands does not bear a due proportion to the amount of effort in the missionary enterprise, and for the want of prayer in the churches at home. It is a lamentation, that the special occasion set apart for such prayer are so little regarded by the professed friends of Jesus Christ. It is one of the dark signs of the times. One of the melancholy proofs that the day of millennial glory is not *very near*, is the little interest which is taken in those precious seasons of united and special supplication, for the conversion of the heathen. Were Paul to rise from his grave, and visit these churches, one of the first privileges he would seek to enjoy, would be the *monthly concert of prayer* for the heathen. Were Jesus Christ again to descend into our world, I am persuaded he would never absent himself from this season of prayer. The

heathen can scarcely be said to be furnished with the means of grace and salvation, until, in addition to the gospel, they have the prayers of the people of God. There can be little doubt that such men as Brainerd and Martyn, Vanderkemp and Morrison, when they came nearest to the throne, offered the most fervent prayers that ever went forth from their lips for the perishing heathen.

But I have done. Whatever you withhold from this cause, my christian hearers, withhold not your prayers. The glory of the Lord Jesus, your own edification, peace and comfort, are deeply involved in this single duty of prayer for the heathen. Your neglect of this duty is felt in pagan lands; and your humble and earnest interest in it is felt there. In your seasons of sweetest intercourse and greatest enlargement at the mercy-seat, therefore, give the heathen a place in your affections. Our obligations to labor and pray for them will not cease till we die. Few are the years before our seasons of toil and of prayer will be over; and most happy will that man then be, who has toiled, and given, and suffered most for this sacred cause; and who, if denied this privilege, has daily, humbly, and as the first and chief of all his desires, preferred this petition to the throne, "*Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven!*"